

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 824

By Massey

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Bobby Denton.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Bobby Denton, an iconic figure in Knoxville radio and The Voice of Neyland Stadium as the public address announcer for University of Tennessee (UT) football for forty-eight years; and

WHEREAS, much beloved by Vols fans in East Tennessee and around the globe, Mr. Denton truly defined the passion and pageantry of college football on Rocky Top, and he immortalized the phrases “It’s football time in Tennessee!” and “Pay these prices and please pay no more”; and

WHEREAS, born in Clinton, Tennessee, and a graduate of Knoxville’s East High School, Bobby Denton began his lifelong love affair with UT football as a youngster, when he sold soda at home games to gain free admission; and

WHEREAS, he began his illustrious career as a public address (PA) announcer at the Smoky Mountain Raceway in the 1950s when the regular announcer failed to appear; and

WHEREAS, he announced drag races for a year before Smokey Mountain Raceway tapped him to announce NASCAR races during the Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt, Sr. era; and

WHEREAS, he was a natural talent and subsequently departed for Alabama’s Talladega Superspeedway, where he served as the track’s NASCAR announcer for sixteen years; and

WHEREAS, as a budding announcer, Mr. Denton worked at WSKT radio in South Knoxville for nine months until WIVK lured the young disc jockey away in 1961; and

WHEREAS, he played rock’n roll music until WIVK adopted a country format three years later; he then relocated to a rock’n roll station in Jacksonville, Florida, for fourteen months before returning to WIVK; and

WHEREAS, for the next thirty-six years, Mr. Denton was instrumental in making WIVK one of the leading mid-market country radio stations in the country; as he ascended the ranks to serve as vice president and general manager, he created a full-service radio station for the Knoxville community; and

WHEREAS, WIVK won four Country Music Association Awards for Radio Station of the Year along with multiple other awards and accolades under his direction; and

WHEREAS, when WIVK was selected for induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame, Mr. Denton accepted the honor in Nashville on behalf of the station; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Denton was hired to replace the legendary John Ward, who was shifting over to radio play-by-play, as Neyland Stadium's public address announcer for UT football after the 1966 football season; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Denton was already well-known as an innovative radio station manager, but few anticipated his innate understanding of the Neyland Stadium crowd and his ability to communicate and interact with them as a body, a product of his experience as a radio announcer; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Denton's iconic phrase, "It's football time in Tennesseeeeeee!", was a favorite of UT fans, and they reacted vociferously when he made that pronouncement; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Denton was also responsible for another crowd-pleasing announcement that involved Neyland Stadium's concession prices; and

WHEREAS, as concession prices began to rise, he suggested printing them in the game programs; to the very end of his career, the UT crowd would roar when he made his famous pitch: "Today's concession prices are found on page 99 of your souvenir program book. We urge you to pay these prices and please pay no more."; and

WHEREAS, on another memorable occasion, as South Carolina faced 4th and 45 yards to go for a first down, Mr. Denton quipped "It's 4th down and the river!" to the delight of the Neyland Stadium crowd; and

WHEREAS, upon learning of Mr. Denton's death, UT Head Football Coach Butch Jones tweeted: "Without Bobby Denton there would be no 'It's Football Time in Tennessee!' Your voice will be heard forever!"; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to honors and accolades, Mr. Denton was inducted into the Knoxville Advertising Federation Hall of Fame and the East High School Alumni Association Hall of Fame, granted Special Recognition in the Greater Knoxville Hall of Fame, and received numerous professional and community awards; and

WHEREAS, an avid golfer, Bobby Denton was known for his charm, charisma, cigar, wit, and warm heart; as a professional, he was a gifted negotiator and motivator and a creative marketer; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember this exceptional broadcaster, announcer, and legendary voice of the Vols; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Bobby Denton, reflecting fondly upon his indelible legacy as The Voice of Neyland Stadium and as the University of Tennessee's public address announcer and recognizing his as a life lived with humor, compassion, and purpose.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family and many friends and fans of Bobby Denton.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.